

News Release

U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
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Gregory A. White, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, announced today that United States District Judge Solomon Oliver, Jr. sentenced Ratko Maslenjak, age 48, of Akron, Ohio, to six months of home detention with electronic monitoring and a two-year term of probation for violating immigration-related criminal statutes. Following a five-day trial, a federal jury previously had returned guilty verdicts on October 2, 2007 on two counts of making false statements on immigration documents.

The evidence at trial revealed that Maslenjak, a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina, failed to disclose on two immigration documents the fact that he had served as an officer in the Republika Srpska Army (VRS), during the Bosnian civil war. His failure to list that fact affected the decisions of United States immigration officials in first allowing Maslenjak to achieve refugee status and later, Permanent Resident Alien Status in the United States. Military records established that Maslenjak, who had a permanent rank of Sargent, served as a company commander in

the summer of 1995, in the Bratunac Light Infantry Brigade of the Drina Corps of the VRS. An investigation conducted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Republic of Yugoslavia into allegations that the VRS was involved in acts of genocide and persecution against Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in July of 1995 resulted in the seizure of the VRS military records. Those records indicated that Maslenjak's brigade had been part of those military operations in which units of the VRS overran a U.N. safe area protecting Bosnian Muslim refugees. However, no evidence was presented that Maslenjak was personally involved in any acts of genocide or persecution. Maslenjak was convicted of materially false omissions on immigration applications which each required disclosure of the applicant's prior military service.

"Our government's ability to effectively evaluate whether or not a person is eligible to come to the United States is severely hampered by those who choose to hide aspects of their past from us," said Brian M. Moskowitz, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations for Ohio and Michigan. "This case illustrates why ICE is committed to investigating those who have obtained their entry into the U.S. through fraudulent means."

The case was prosecuted by Phillip J. Tripi, Assistant United States Attorney, and Michael J. Rendon, Special Assistant United States Attorney, following an investigation by United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

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